The Aftermath of A Failed Legacy

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The Aftermath of A Failed Legacy

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Summary

Pawbert wakes from a nightmare.

Notes

Pawbert has alters and nobody can convince me otherwise

Shaking paws. Venomous fangs clutched tight. What was Pawbert doing? Why couldn't he stop himself?

Pawbert's brow furrowed, his heart sinking like an abandoned ship in a chilled ocean. Father needed this. Pawbert needed to put a stop to this madness. If they got away, his legacy would be tainted and blackened.

What would Pawbert be if not a Lynxley? Just another scrap waiting to be tossed?

We can't have that.

Pawbert took heavy steps towards his destiny, the world around him as cloudy as a frenzied blizzard. A soft plea came from Judy, too far away to reach in the storm. He felt a twinge of guilt at her strained voice, but it evaporated into dust.

Nothing and everything felt real.

What a shame. A hero dying by her own gullibility. Why be a saviour when you can be a traitor instead?

“I don't want to be different,” Pawbert heard himself say.

Snow blurred his mind into static. As cold as what lay outside. Gary. He wouldn't survive in this weather, would he? There couldn't be any survivors. What would Pawbert's father say if he left them alive? He could almost hear his voice echoing in his mind.

You NEED to be a Lynxley. There is nothing beyond this. You are ***nothing*** *without me.*

Pawbert's heart sank deeper and deeper into the abyss, just as Gary's home had been long ago by his own blood. Getting attached was foolish. A Lynxley and De'Snake? Disgusting. It never would've worked.

Legacies cannot be erased. All Pawbert could do is stumble upon its set path.

Gary is an obstacle. He would've left you anyway. Why would anyone want to be with a failure? Family is the only thing you can rely on.

Pawbert stared at Judy and Gary, their eyes now as glassy as the ice in his soul. It never mattered, anyway. Did it? Nothing lasts. Love is fleeting and conditional. No matter what he could've done, the end result would've been the same: loneliness too painful to bear.

Teasing coils could swiftly turn into suffocation, born out of an old family feud. Kind words carry hefty expectations that will never be achieved. Every selfless action has a hidden motive. Nobody gives love unless there's a whip behind their back.

An empty home was all that awaited Pawbert after all was said and done. Nobody but his

own reflection and the ghost of his father to haunt him forever. His legacy would be nothing but a broken statue staring at him from the beyond.

A choked gasp escaped from Pawbert's mouth, leaving behind a wisp of condensation. It morphed into his father, starting him down with a stern expression, arms crossed. Pawbert winced, instinctively blocking himself.

What did Pawbert do this time to disappoint? He tried to carve a new path for his family, even if he had to leave behind a trail of blood to do so. What more could Pawbert possibly give? His own soul was in chains already. His father had the key. Didn't that make him happy?

Judy and Gary were gone. Nick and Nibbles were nowhere to be seen. Pawbert was utterly alone. Not even his siblings would bear witness to his punishment. Maybe that was what Pawbert deserved after everything he did. Pain was the only way to learn a lesson.

Pawbert clenched his eyes shut, awaiting the onslaught.

–

Pawbert woke up with a shout, trembling as he clenched his pillow like a lifeline. The image of his angered father flashed in his mind's eye, tormenting him. His breaths quickened until his lungs felt raw. He felt tense and sore all over, as if he had been punished after all.

A shuffle came from beneath the blanket. Pawbert's ear twitched at the sound, and he turned towards its source. Gary. His small head peeked out, gazing at Pawbert with deep concern in his otherworldly eyes.

“Pawbert,” Gary began, his voice seeping with syrupy warmth. He slithered across the worn mattress, wrapping gently around Pawbert's torso. “Are you alright?”

“I-I,” Pawbert stammered, memories flooding back into his conscious mind. His face warmed beneath his fur as Gary's coils tightened. His dream wasn't his reality. Gary was alive. Pawbert was free. And—and…

Gary nuzzled his face into Pawbert's furry cheek, careful to keep his fang at a distance. “Sweet Lynx. I'm here for you if you need to talk about it.”

Pawbert felt his body relax as the end of Gary's tail ran calming circles on his back. He took in a shaky breath, his paws slowly inching towards Gary's coils to place them there. He gently kneaded his paws on the slick scales, grounding himself in his familiar yet foreign environment.

A self-aware voice in Pawbert's mind noted that he just woke up from a long nightmare of his own making. He was no longer stuck in his own looping memories as he once was. This was a new era beyond a tormented house and desolate jail cell. Pawbert was fully awake in a better place.

In his field of vision Pawbert saw a lively tent, lit by a warm sunset orange hue. Not quite the same as his old one. For one, it was much larger, filled to the brim with carpets, old books, snake memorabilia, and even a few added cat toys. The scent of spiced incense lingered in the air.

The bed Pawbert laid on was large but modest. The carved wood of its frame depicted a lynx and snake, interlocked in a coiled embrace. The blanket still wrapped around Pawbert's frame was a quilt, and an internal whisper reminded him that it had once belonged to Gary's grandmother.

How did Pawbert get here? Was this just another dream? He turned his gaze towards Gary, who stared back, patient and calm. His twinkling eyes betrayed no fear, anger, or resentment whatsoever. Only love. But how was that possible?

“You're free now.” Gary whispered, as if reading Pawbert's mind. “He's gone.”

Father was gone?

“How?” Pawbert whispered back, incredulous.

Gary said nothing. He moved closer, giving a gentle flick of his tongue to the corner of Pawbert's mouth. A shiver crept up Pawbert's spine at the ticklish sensation. He felt a flame spark to life in his chest, filling him with a deep warmth.

“I… I got out.”

Gary simply nodded, a smile creeping on his face. *“Daddy's busy,”* he said in a teasing voice, rewriting a once painful memory. “He has a lot of time to think about what he's done and where he is.”

Pawbert laughed a little. Some part of him seemed to understand the joke. “Good.” Did Pawbert belong there too, after all that he did? “Jail is the only place he belongs at this point.”

“You didn't deserve to be there.”

Pawbert tensed. How did Gary know?

“That wasn't you. I know it wasn't,” Gary insisted. “I knew *something* was wrong the moment we reached that place. There was a strange energy in the air. You were acting so calm up until then.”

“My father.”

Gary nodded. “I know he had a grip on you.”

Pawbert looked away from Gary, too ashamed to look him in the face. The image of Gary's pained face flashed in Pawbert's mind. His once vibrant eyes reflected the cold snow

surrounding him. Pawbert felt a lurch in his chest.

Utilizing the end of his tail, Gary adjusted Pawbert to face him once again. A fire burned in Gary's gaze, showcasing his determination to pull Pawbert from his past and into the present. Why Gary did this was beyond Pawbert's comprehension.

“I made a choice,” Pawbert replied. “I didn't want to be different.”

“You do now.”

More memories were unlocked in Pawbert's mind. Hazy nights spent huddled for warmth. Deep talks lingering until the sunrise. Warm kisses shared in the light of day. A bond that surpassed any earthly means. A connection that withstood broken legacies and generational trauma.

“I stole *everything* from you.”

Gary shook his head. “Your family stole everything from me,” he corrected. “But you've been helping me get it back.”

Pawbert tilted his head, raising an eyebrow. “I have?”

Gary smiled tenderly, brushing a stray tear from Pawbert's eye. “You have the moment you smuggled me into Zootopia. I never would've had a fighting chance without you.”

“But, I—”

Gary laid his tail against Pawbert's mouth, interrupting him. “I don't blame you for what happened.” His smile grew sad. “It… hurt, what you did to me. To us. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that you were just as pained as I was.”

“I wanted to know what happened. I spent months trying to piece everything together. I spoke to anyone who might've known you. I visited you in jail so many times to pull the truth out. You seemed so dead inside.”

A bitter cold washed over Pawbert. He recalled months of going back and forth between guilt-ridden isolation and desperate grovelling at his disappointed father. He didn't know which was worse. “Yeah, I was.”

“Eventually, I was able to figure out what really happened,” Gary continued. “Your father was abusing you. He kept you under a control that you weren't able to fight off. I knew I had to get you out of there. I knew it wasn't your fault.”

Pawbert remembered being bailed out and having his case fought in court by Gary, who was invigorated and passionate for his cause. Back then, Pawbert had no idea why. He still didn't, if he was being honest.

“You still… care about me? After all that?” Pawbert asked, his voice strained. He felt his

eyes water as more tears dripped down his face.

“Of *course* I do.” Gary nuzzled into Pawbert's neck. “I love you, Pawbert. And I always have. Since the moment you wrote me back.”

At last, Pawbert was able to connect with his other selves. Full-fledged memories came back to him at once. And after all of this time, Pawbert knew exactly what Gary was to him.

“I love you, too.”

His partner.

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